

NISC Communications Plan

ISAC Communications, Education, and Outreach Subcommittee

Purpose

The purpose of the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) is “to prevent the introduction of invasive species and provide for their control and to minimize the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause” (EO #13112). Specific program goals are listed in the National Invasive Species Management Plan (2008).

This communications plan is intended to guide communications of NISC, NISC staff, and the Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC). Our assumption is that increased information-sharing and coordination of invasive species issues ultimately will result in an increase in invasive species-free lands, waters, and trade in the United States.

Communications Goal

To increase awareness and use of NISC, ISAC, and their products (e.g., white papers, National Management Plan, reports) among federal agencies, policy makers, scientists, the media, natural resource managers, state ISCs, and interested NGOs.

Communications Outcome

NISC and ISAC are recognized and used as “tools” or conduits into networks of national and state organizations for information exchange.

Communications Strategy

Specific audiences will be identified. Communication pieces will be targeted to specific audiences with appropriate formats, messages, and delivery methods.

Audience	NISC/ISAC product	Delivery method	Responsibility	When?
Federal agencies	ISAC recommendations	Written document	NISC liaisons	Post-ISAC meetings (2x/yr)
	Crosscut budget report	Written document	NISC liaisons	Semi-annually
	National Invasive Species Management Plan	Written document, NISC website	NISC liaisons	As necessary (ref. frequently)
	ISAC white papers	Written document, presentations	NISC staff & liaisons	As necessary
	NISC newsletter	Email	NISC staff	Monthly
	Compilations and analyses of federal agency programs & policies ¹	Written document, presentations, NISC website	NISC staff & liaisons	As necessary

¹ Performance elements within the National Invasive Species Management Plan (2008) related to communications – status reports and analyses, compilations, BMPs, consistent IS messages, educational programs, etc. (See **Addendum 1: Communications Projects.**)

	National Invasive Species Awareness Week	Presentations, live webcasting	NISAW Steering Committee	Annually
Policy makers²	Crosscut budget report	Written document, presentations, meetings with Congressional staff	NISC staff	Semi-annually
	Compilations and analyses of federal agency programs & policies	Written document, presentations, meetings with Congressional staff	NISC staff	As necessary
	NISC newsletter	Email	NISC staff	Monthly
	Briefings on timely topics	Presentations, fact sheets	NISC staff	At least annually
	National Invasive Species Awareness Week	Presentations, live webcasting	NISAW Steering Committee	Annually
Scientists	NISC newsletter	Email	NISC staff	Monthly
	Updates and discussions of emerging science	Webinars, other web-based technologies	NISC staff and liaisons	Semi-annually
	NISC reports regarding the science of invasive spp.	Event sponsorship, presentations, posters	NISC staff and liaisons, ISAC members	As opportunities arise
	ISAC white papers	Email, NISC website	NISC staff, ISAC members	As necessary
Natural resource managers	NISC newsletter	Email	NISC staff	Monthly
	Updates and discussions of timely topics	Webinars, other web-based technologies	NISC staff and state ISC reps	Bi-monthly
	NISC reports regarding prevention & management (e.g., BMPs)	Event sponsorship, presentations, displays & posters	NISC staff and liaisons, ISAC members	As opportunities arise (at least 4x/yr)
	Breaking news	Facebook, other social media	ISAC member(s)	At least 1x/week
	ISAC white papers	Email, NISC website	NISC staff, ISAC members	As necessary
State invasive species councils	NISC newsletter	Email	NISC staff	Monthly
	Policy updates, funding opportunities, calendar, news, Q&A for state ISCs	State ISC listserv, NISC website	NISC staff and liaisons	Ongoing, as needed
	ISAC white papers	State ISC listserv, NISC website	NISC staff, ISAC members	As necessary
	Updates and discussions of timely topics	Webinars, other web-based technologies	NISC staff and state ISC reps	Bi-monthly
	National Invasive Species Awareness Week	Presentations, live webcasting	NISAW Steering Committee	Annually
	NISC reports regarding policy, management, education & outreach, etc.	Event sponsorship, presentations, displays & posters	NISC staff and liaisons, ISAC members	As opportunities arise
	Breaking news	Facebook, other social media	ISAC member(s)	At least 1x/week
Interested NGOs	NISC newsletter	Email	NISC staff	Monthly

² See **Addendum 2: Communication of ISAC Positions/Comments** for clarification of what and how NISC/ISAC may communicate with Congress.

	Updates and discussions of timely topics	Webinars, other web-based technologies	NISC staff and state ISC reps	Bi-monthly
	National Invasive Species Awareness Week	Presentations, live webcasting	NISAW Steering Committee	Annually
	Breaking news	Facebook, other social media	ISAC member(s)	At least 1x/week
ISAC members	NISC newsletter	Email	NISC staff	Monthly
	ISAC minutes & recommendations	Email, NISC website	NISC staff	Post-ISAC meetings (2x/yr)
	ISAC white papers	Email, NISC website	NISC staff	As necessary
	Meeting materials	Email, NISC website	NISC staff and ISAC St Cmte Vice-Chair	Pre-ISAC meetings (2x/yr)
	Subcommittee information and materials	Conference calls, email	NISC staff and ISAC subcommittee chairs	As necessary
Media	Press releases	Email, interview	NISC staff	As necessary (at least 4x/yr)
	Breaking news	Facebook, other social media	ISAC member(s)	At least 1x/week

Evaluation *(How do we know whether communications are effective?)*

For each audience, set objectives, milestones, and evaluation measures (SMART: specific, measurable, attainable, result-focused, time-specific). For example:

Federal agencies

Objective: By the end of year two, position NISC as the key organization for analyzing and facilitating interagency policy differences.

Milestone: Analyze differences among NISC agencies' policies on prevention, EDRR, and control of invasive species by the end of year one.

Quantitative/Qualitative measures:

- # presentations of results made to federal agencies by NISC staff
- # requests by federal agencies for facilitation of interagency issues
- # questions/concerns from federal agencies that are funneled through NISC to ISAC for advice

Policy makers

Objective: By the end of year two, position NISC as the primary source of credible information on invasive species with policy makers.

Milestone: Organize a congressional briefing on a timely topic for Hill staffers by the end of year one.

Quantitative/Qualitative measures:

- # Hill staffers attending the briefing

- # inquiries received from Hill staff in succeeding 90 days
- # bills in which “invasive species” concerns are incorporated

State invasive species councils

Objective: By the end of year two, position NISC as the information hub and coordinating mechanism for state invasive species councils.

Milestone: Establish and coordinate a national listserv for state invasive species councils by the end of year one.

Quantitative/Qualitative measures:

- # states represented on the listserv
- # participants actively involved on the listserv
- # discussion topics addressed by listserv members

Media

Objective: By the end of year two, position NISC as a credible source of information on invasive species with key media outlets.

Milestone: Establish a relationship with journalists from 10 key media outlets by the end of year one.

Quantitative/Qualitative measures:

- # communication exchanges between NISC & journalists
- # times NISC spokesperson quoted in key media outlets
- # times NISC website referenced in key media outlets

Identified Needs

To effectively implement a comprehensive communications plan, several needs have been identified:

1. Identify “communicators” and “information hubs” for the specified audiences. Consider establishing (or facilitating establishment of) an information hub for audiences that lack such a mechanism (e.g., state invasive species councils).
2. Re-evaluate the NISC newsletter format. Consider using commercial newsletter software.
3. Re-evaluate the process for managing the NISC website. Consider alternative hosts.
4. Determine a process for issuing NISC news releases in a timely fashion.
5. Build contacts with the media.
6. Prioritize audiences.
7. Prioritize communication projects.
8. Designate a communications coordinator on NISC staff.

Communication Projects with NISC Staff lead From the National Invasive Species Management Plan (2008)

- Performance Element P.3.5.1: Encourage non-federal stakeholders to publish codes of conduct and BMPs on the web.
- Performance Element P.3.6.1: Distribute any new BMPs that NISC staff are made aware of to all relevant NISC members and other interested parties.
- Performance Element EDRR.5.1.1: Working with ISAC, states, and others, explore and prepare options for cooperation and funding Rapid Response; submit to NISC for discussion and selection of preferred alternative(s).
- Performance Element OC.1.1.1: Complete a brief status report/analysis of federal laws and regulations dealing with invasive species.
- Performance Element OC.2.1.1: Complete Invasive Species Inter-Agency Performance Budgets for fiscal years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013, along with reports on prior year's performance.
- Performance Element OC.4.1.1: Prepare draft NEPA guidance for CEQ consideration and finalize.
- Performance Element OC.4.2.1: Collect, organize and make available NISC agencies' policies on prevention, EDRR, and control of invasive species.
- Performance Element OC.5.1.1: Prepare monthly report of upcoming international meetings on invasive species to be distributed to federal agencies and others.
- Performance Element OC.6.2.1: Provide information about at least eight invasive species programs to educational organizations/invasive species outreach programs.
- Performance Element OC.6.3.1: Communicate clear and consistent general messages on invasive species to all NISC members and stakeholders so that they may include these points when a new invasive species action, regulation or policy is announced. Communicate via the internet.
- (Various performance elements): NISC staff to collate and report information on:
 - Options for funding research for EDRR
 - Three priority species or locations that need additional or enhanced control methods.
 - Acres of land or water included in regional invasive species control and management programs.
 - The percentage of high-priority, at-risk acres successfully treated.
 - The ratio of projects technically supported vs. on-the-ground projects requesting technical support.
 - The number of on-the-ground projects technically supported.
 - The number of acres receiving "on-the-ground" control and management treatments.
 - The number of acres and species monitored and mapped.
 - Invasive species prevention plans, such as those that utilize HACCP, so they may be incorporated into federally-funded or authorized restoration projects.
 - Four interagency restoration projects that demonstrate the success of information-sharing, plant- (and animal-) sharing, techniques for cost-effective modeling, and documentation of results, including decision-support tools.
 - Four successful restoration projects involving recovery from invasive species impacts (e.g., on private lands or in coastal environments) with nongovernmental cooperators.
 - Four successful fire rehabilitation and fuels treatment projects involving recovery from invasive species impacts on different kinds of public lands (such as range, forest, shrub, and steppe).

COMMUNICATION OF ISAC POSITIONS/COMMENTS to the LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT³

Key Questions:

1. What is the position/information that ISAC wishes to communicate?
2. To whom (ultimately) does ISAC wish to communicate the position/information?
3. What type of initiative is contemplated relative to the ISAC position/information e.g. international body, domestic legislation, domestic regulation, information?
4. Deriving from the answer in (3) above, to whom (ultimately) can ISAC under its charter and/or FACA requirements communicate the position/information?
5. If more than one entity may communicate, which entity would be the most effective transmitter based on the receiving audience?

Base Assumptions:

1. The purpose of the Invasive Species Advisory Committee (ISAC) is to “advise the Invasive Species Council (Council) as authorized by Executive Order 13112, on a broad array of issues related to preventing the introduction of invasive species and providing for their control, as well as minimizing the economic, ecological, and human health impacts that invasive species cause.” (ISAC Charter)
2. Based on the ISAC charter, ISAC exists under the Executive Order, for the sole purpose of advising the Council and thus, as a general rule, any ISAC positions, comments or information should flow from ISAC to NISC, via the NISC Executive Director. Exceptions to this general rule occur where (1) ISAC provides positions, comments or information as part of a joint NISC/ISAC meeting, (2) NISC specifically requests information directly from ISAC in which case the NISC Executive Director shall be copied, and (3) NISC specifically requests that ISAC respond to an entity other than NISC in which case the NISC Executive Director shall be copied and provide copies to NISC.
3. NISC is composed solely of Executive Branch representatives and thus ISAC is subject to the same restrictions and responsibilities applied to the Executive Branch in general.

³ This document was researched and written by ISAC member Kathy Metcalf. The main points are: (1) to be certain that ISAC understands its limitations re: conveying information to various entities, e.g. federal agencies, NISC, Congress; (2) understanding that federal agencies cannot lobby Congress; and (3) assuring that the oversight function of ISAC activities by NISC is preserved through good communications between the two bodies.

4. The Executive Branch may not lobby the legislative branch; however the Executive Branch may provide information, upon request, to the Legislative Branch. Thus, ISAC may provide information to the Council upon request or on its own volition, but ISAC, as a body, cannot convey information directly to the Legislative Branch under any circumstances.
5. Information provided by ISAC to the Council may be transmitted to the Legislative Branch either by incorporation into a transmittal document to the Legislative Branch from the Council or may be transmitted by the Council via a cover letter endorsed by the Council to which the ISAC information document is attached in total. The decision on which method of transmission is preferable rests with the Council and is subject to the legal requirement that the Executive Branch may not lobby the Legislative Branch.
6. Positions and comments with respect to regulatory initiatives, which by their definition, are initiated by the Executive Branch, are not subject to the restrictions noted above relative to prohibition of Executive Branch lobbying of the Legislative Branch.
7. ISAC, either on request of the Council, or on its own volition, may develop positions/comments on regulatory initiatives. Such comments are fully within the stated purpose of ISAC as provided in the ISAC Charter referenced in 1. above. ISAC as an entity, may not, without the prior approval of the Council, submit comments to the public docket without the prior approval of the Council. In some instances, the Council may wish to provide formal comments to the docket based on comments, in whole or in part, as provided by ISAC or may wish to authorize ISAC to directly submit comments to the docket providing such comments include text which indicates that the comments are being submitted with the direct authorization of the Council
8. Positions/comments from ISAC must flow from ISAC through the Council's Executive Director to the Council regardless of type of initiative or legal restrictions.
9. All ISAC positions/comments relative to regulatory initiatives forwarded through the Executive Director to the Council must request a specific response from the Council unless such positions/comments are forwarded for informational purposes only. In particular, ISAC positions/comments forwarded to the Council on regulatory initiatives, must request a specific response from NISC relative to ultimate disposition of the positions/comments provided e.g. the Council chooses to take no action, the Council agrees to submit formal comments to a regulatory docket on its own behalf or, the Council agrees that ISAC may submit the formal comments on its own behalf.
10. Where the transmission of positions/comments may be made either by the Council or ISAC per 8. above subject to the will of the Council, the final decision shall reflect strategic considerations including to whom the positions/comments will be provided and the impact and weight afforded the receiving entity relative to the provider of this information.

11. Practically speaking, a request for expert information from ISAC may be made either by or through the Council or directly to ISAC by legislative or regulatory bodies. In the case where this request comes directly from the Council, ISAC shall respond appropriately and shall provide the requested information to any entities named by the Council in its request which may include the Council or other entities including the legislative branch. Where the information request comes directly to ISAC from a legislative or regulatory entity, ISAC shall coordinate its response with the decision of the Council on how this information can be best provided in a comprehensive and timely manner.

EXAMPLE:

Communications of ISAC position/comments on a recommendation to revise and draft NEPA guidance

Full text of Recommendation: “ISAC recommends that NISC and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) revise and draft guidance under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and make it available for public comment by October 1, 2009.

Background: The need for a revised draft guidance under NEPA as it relates to the consideration on invasive species issues was identified a number of years ago. Agency liaisons have regularly briefed ISAC on the progress made on this issue at the departmental/agency level. A formal recommendation (see above) was made by ISAC at its May 2007 meeting and requested that the revised NEPA guidance document be finalized and available for public comment by October 1, 2009. At its December 1-2, 2009 meeting, ISAC was advised that the NEPA guidance document, vetted and agreed to by NISC agencies, was forwarded to the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

Action Contemplated: What can ISAC do to urge CEQ to move the document out of its internal review process and make it available for public comment and ultimately final publication?

Using the template above for ISAC communications of positions and comments, the following questions must be answered:

1. **What is the position/information that ISAC wishes to communicate?**

The need to get final Administration approval on the text of the revised NEPA guidance document relative to the integration of invasive species into legally required NEPA analyses, permit publication of the document for public comment and ultimately to get final approval of the document for use by entities subject to NEPA requirements.

2. **To whom (ultimately) does ISAC wish to communicate the position/information?**

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

- 3. What type of initiative is contemplated relative to the ISAC position/information e.g. international body, domestic legislation, domestic regulation, information?**

Advocacy position among the Executive Branch (not subject to prohibition of Executive Branch advocacy/lobbying of Legislative Branch)

- 4. Deriving from the answer in (3) above, to whom (ultimately) can ISAC under its charter and/or FACA requirements communicate the position/information?**

Based on its charter, ISAC should convey its position on this issue to NISC via the Executive Director with suggested formatted text which could be used by NISC in sending the communication to CEQ. A less desirable alternative (based on comments in 5. below) would be to solicit NISC's approval for ISAC transmission of the developed position urging clearance of the NEPA guidance document and publication for public comment and ultimately final approval.

- 5. If more than one entity may communicate, which entity would be the most effective transmitter based on the receiving audience?**

Accepting that the NEPA guidance document has been thoroughly vetted and cleared by NISC, the communication to CEQ requests an action based solely on policy considerations. With this in mind, it is proposed that the most powerful transmission of the message here would be in a document agreed to and endorsed by NISC which could also indicate that the espoused position was fully supported by ISAC, although the latter is not essential. Transmission of this message by just ISAC would dilute the political and policy power inherent in a request endorsed by NISC composed of Cabinet level officials.